

UNCLE OWEN'S LIFE

By COL. JOHN R. MUSICK.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

JOHN REDGRAVE'S FATE.

The fatal evening for the raid by the river pirates on Nelson's Landing came. The night was favorable for such a fiendish design. Early in the afternoon Capt. Mark and two or three more had stolen to the old wreck. Early in the afternoon John Redgrave came, with his face pale from dejection and his nerves all unstrung. He was sober now, but it was from necessity.

That craving for drink common in every inebriate almost drove him mad. He had ceased to drink, because his Uncle Owen had refused to give him more money or be responsible for any further delinquency in all contract. This was a truth and reality in a desperate strait.

On entering the presence of Capt. Mark and the others he groaned:

"Give me something to steady my nerves. The still's closed. Not a gill of high wines or even sour mash, and I am dying."

Capt. Mark took a flask from an inside pocket of his coat and said to a very small glass gave it to him to drink.

"That will do you for the present, John. We have to talk over some very important matters now and we don't want your head added until we've got everything settled."

"Well, what's it got to be?"

"John, the old man's gone back on you, hasn't he?"

"Yes."

"I thought he had; won't give you a cent?"

"Not a red."

"John, you will have to earn some yourself."

"I won't work," declared John. "I'm not a nigger, and I won't work."

"But the job is a good one for you. It is a nice, genteel one, you know. You are only required to go with us and help count the money after some of our boys have opened the way."

"Uncle Owen's already disgraced me by marryin', and then he turned me adrift, and I don't want to become a nigger," he declared.

"I guess I'll go."

It was a long tramp to the river to Nelson's Landing, but so diligently did the men bend to their oars that by 2 o'clock in the morning they were in the vicinity of Nelson's Landing.

The boats ran slowly up to the landing, and came into shore. A man leaped from each boat with a line and pulled them close into shore.

The others leaped to the stony land, and finally came John Redgrave's turn. He objected to leaving the boat.

"Oh, boys, what do you want me to go for?" he asked. "There are enough of you without me, and there is no sense in me going at all."

"Yes, there is, John," said Capt. Mark. "You must come, for we want all."

John was assured that there was no danger, as everybody was asleep, and the money easy to reach. At last they told him he would have a flask of excellent old rye whiskey if he only consented to go with them; which settled the matter.

Capt. Mark and George went to the stern and stood around the boat, looking at it from every side.

"It seems closed for the night," said Capt. Mark.

"Yes, George answered, "but that shutter is loose. We can make our way in through that best."

"George, I am going to leave it entirely to you. You are the expert in this matter, and the house, where the chances for trouble are greater."

"In the opinion of old Jonathan Myers, who has been in the house for years, it is a safe place. We'll do the job so nicely he won't wake," said Capt. Mark. "Now let us go back to the boys, and you can commence at once."

The men could be dimly seen grasping about the store building. George went to one of the windows and seized a shutter. After some little trouble he succeeded in opening it.

He was about to raise the window when there came a blinding flash, accompanied by an earthquake rumble, and the shuttered back, threw his hands to his face, and fell.

A perfect fusillade rained on the men gathered about the store, and two more fell.

The others fired a volley in return, and fled.

"Death and fury!" roared Capt. Mark. "We are betrayed."

The town was quiet and peaceful a moment before was now alive with people, and shots blazed in every direction. Where Mark and his part of the burglars stood bullets whizzed and struck up the dirt.

"To the boats, boys; to the boats," yelled Capt. Mark at the top of his voice.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DEATH SENTENCE.

The day of Frank Vernon's trial came at last. He had never lost hope, though all along he was charged with a vague dread of the result. His conscience clear, for he knew that if the man was dead he had slain him in self-defense. None of Frank's friends saw La Flore since his alleged murder, and none dreamed that he lived. It had been John Redgrave's policy to keep him out of the way until his dangerous friends were safely out of the way. John Redgrave's death his companions, who knew that La Flore lived, had motives of their own for keeping the fact secret. Uncle Owen, who had been charged with the fruitless search for his wife, became interested in the young revenue officer. He had seen him, engaged additional counsel, and bore evidence as to his good character.

But the Redgrave name had fallen into disrepute. Uncle Owen, espousing the cause of his wife, was charged with the murder of his sister-in-law, became himself a suspect. His nephew having slain in an attempted robbery started the false report that he himself had been guilty of like acts.

The enemies of Owen Redgrave, those who had envied him in prosperity, now felt sure that he had over the property to outlived. Many shook their heads and muttered:

"It's plain as day now."

Though these unjust rumors and suspicions were rife, none dared go so far as to attempt an attack, or to issue a warrant against Mr. Redgrave.

Mr. Redgrave's influence, at one time almost unbounded, was now practically gone. Then when he came to testify on the witness stand he knew nothing whatever about the case, save that Mr. Frank Vernon possessed an excellent character.

Witnesses were introduced in rebuttal to prove that Owen Redgrave's reputation for truth and veracity had become bad, and the jury of course was not expected to believe him.

Uncle Owen and Lillie Bunkles were the only friends visitors the unfortunate prisoner had had. Others came, but they were mostly newspaper reporters and detectives, whose chief object was to entangle him in some statement and convict him on his own evidence.

On the morning of the trial, shortly after the opening of the trial, shortly

after the prisoner, pale, but calm, was led into the court room, and seated, a slight form glided within the rail, and a lovely face was raised to the Judge, while a voice full of tender entreaty appealed to the court:

"May I sit by him?"

The astonished Judge fixed his stern eyes on her for a moment, and then, melted by the compassionate look in her face, recognized that she might be his daughter. He was sober now, but it was from necessity.

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"Misses Redgrave, ye must know me give ye more money afore ye go."

"No, no, Tom; I have no right to accept any gifts from you."

"Well, lem me lend et, then, won't ye? I'll lend ye all I got an' yer old man'll pay me back."

He took a roll of bills from his vest pocket.

"That's \$226 then, I want ye to take every last bit of it, fur ye'll need it. Yer old man will pay et back, an' I'll be sure."

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